

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11

HA-05 PC-01 AID-05 TRSE-00 /075 W

-----052221 092312Z /61

R 091530Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9252

INFO AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONROVIA 3387

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, LI

SUBJECT: PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE OF LIBERIA GOES PUBLIC

REF: MONROVIA 2746 (NOTAL)

1. THE PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE OF LIBERIA (PAL) HELD ITS PROMOSSED PUBLIC RALLY FROM 5 TO 7 P.M., MAY 6, ON THE BEACH OPPOSITE THE "COCONUT GROVE", A SPOT AT THE FOOT OF RANDALL STREET AND ACCESSIBLE TO DOWNTOWN MONROVIA. (THE JANUARY/MARCH 1978 EDITION OF THE PAL ORGAN, THE REVOLUTION, HAD PROMISED A "MASS MEETING" IN MONROVIA ON MARCH 25.) AN ESTIMATED 400 PERSONS GATHERED TO HEAR PAL PRESIDENT GABRIEL MATTHEWS URGE SUPPORT FOR A PAL IN ITS EFFORTS TO FOUND A POLITICAL PARTY. NO UNIFORMED POLICE OR SOLDIERS WERE PRESENT, ALTHOUGH THE GOL NO DOUBT HAD ITS AGENTS PRESENT.

2. EARLIER IN THE AFTERNOON, MATTHEWS CALLED ON THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR TO INFORM HIM OF THE RALLY. MATTHEWS SAID THAT THE GOL HAD REFUSED PERMISSION FOR PAL TO HOLD ITS RALLY APRIL 15 AT THE EXECUTIVE PAVILION
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IN DOWNTOWN MONROVIA ON THE GROUNDS THAT THIS WAS FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; AND SIMILARLY HAD REFUSED PERMISSION TO MEET AT TUBMAN STADIUM, STATING THAT THIS WAS FOR ATHLETIC EVENTS ONLY. ACCORDING TO MATTHEWS, THE GOL HAD SENT A TRUCK-LOAD OF TROOPS TO THE EXECUTIVE PAVILION APRIL 15 TO ENSURE THAT PAL DID NOT ATTEMPT TO HOLD ITS MEETING THERE ON THAT DATE. MATTHEWS SAID

THAT HE WOULD NOT ASK FOR USE OF THE AUDITORIUM IN THE E.J. ROYE BUILDING, SITE OF THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE TRUE WHIG PARTY WHICH OWNS IT, BECAUSE THIS WOULD RAISE DOUBTS CONCERNING THE INDEPENDENT STATUS OF PAL. HE HAD INFORMED PRESIDENT TOLBERT BY LETTER OF HIS INTENTION TO HOLD THIS MEETING ON THE BEACH. ACCORDING TO MATTHEWS, PAL SUPPORTERS SPENT SATURDAY AFTERNOON TOURING MONROVIA WITH LOUDSPEAKERS ENCOURAGING ATTENDANCE AT THE BEACH RALLY, AND DISTRIBUTING PAMPHLETS.

3. MATTHEWS SAID THAT HE EXPECTED POLICE SUPPRESSION OF HIS POLITICAL MOVEMENT BUT THAT HE WAS DETERMINED TO CONTINUE ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITY. HE BELIEVES THAT THE LIBERIAN PEOPLE WANT CHANGE AND THAT IT WILL COME WHETHER OR NOT THE AUTHORITIES TRY TO STOP IT.

4. COMMENT: AS FAR AS WE KNOW, THIS IS THE FIRST NON-TWP PUBLIC POLITICAL MEETING TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE SINCE 1955 WHEN THE INDEPENDENT TRUE WHIG PARTY AND THE REFORMATION PARTY WERE BANNED. MATTHEWS' SUCCESS IN PERSUADING 400 PEOPLE TO GATHER FOR OVERTLY POLITICAL PURPOSES OUTSIDE TWP AUSPICES, AND IN OPPOSITION TO THE ADMINISTRATION, WILL CERTAINLY ENCOURAGE HIM AND HIS SUPPORTERS. IT WILL PROBABLY START A DEBATE WITHIN THE TWP BETWEEN THOSE WHO WOULD SUPPRESS PAL WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND THOSE OF A MORE LIBERAL VIEW.
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